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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FORMALLY INVESTS A SHAKY
EL-FASSI GOVERNMENT

REF: RABAT 1647 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: An October 31 parliamentary vote of confidence formally invested Prime Minister El-Fassi's cabinet with full constitutional authority to govern. Due to the absence of almost one quarter of the members, the government was confirmed with less than a majority of the 325 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Among those who voted, the margin was comfortably in the new government's favor. The vote came after several days of debate over PM El-Fassi's outline of priorities, in which the Islamist opposition dished out scathing criticism and even a key member party of the governing coalition voiced open ambivalence. End summary.

12. (C) On October 31, a parliamentary vote of confidence formally invested Prime Minister El-Fassi's new cabinet with authority to govern, a process stipulated by Article 24 of the Moroccan constitution. One hundred and fifty-five members of parliament voted in favor of the new government, 93 members voted against, and 7 abstained. Though state TV described the vote as giving El-Fassi's government "a comfortable majority," 70 of the 325 members of the Chamber of Deputies were absent for this procedurally critical vote, a fact likely to reinforce doubts among parliament's many critics in the media and civil society about the institution's strength and relevance. Even some normally pro-government sources have been scathing about what this turnout says about El-Fassi and the parliament he leads.

13. (C) The confidence vote came after five days of debate which followed PM El-Fassi's October 24 speech outlining his government's priorities (an event also marked by low attendance among MPs). In the intervening five days, several parliamentary groupings attacked the El-Fassi government and its proposed program. The attacks were led by the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), which with 46 seats is the largest single voting bloc in the opposition. The PJD excoriated El-Fassi's plans to create 250,000 jobs per year and overhaul the country's education system as vague and unrealistic. Senior PJD leaders publicly predicted that the El-Fassi government will fall within 1 to 2 years. We have increasingly heard this prediction from both sides of the aisle.

14. (C) Even the leftist USFP, a member of El-Fassi's coalition, announced it would pursue a policy of "critical participation" in the government. Mohammed Guessous, member of the USFP's executive board, admitted to poloff that the party was badly divided from within over the question of participation in the government, while party deputy chair Driss Lachgar told us candidly in a recent conversation that

the party "would participate in the government even as it works to make it fall." Similarly, Fatiha El-Ayadi, spokeswoman for the "Tradition and Modernity" bloc led by royal confidante and former Deputy Interior Minister Fouad Aly Al-Himma, told us in an October 30 meeting that her bloc would provide support from a distance to the El-Fassi government. El-Ayadi also predicted El-Fassi's government would fall within two years.

15. (C) Comment: The vote of confidence was a legal formality, and its outcome never in doubt. The absence of so many MPs from the vote may partly reflect parliament's institutional weakness and certainly reflects a lack of commitment among much of its membership. Working with the new parliament will be one of post's priorities in the coming term. End comment.

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